

# Youth stand together for a healthier future

The rallying cry of students from universities across South Africa has swept the nation – for a safer, healthier, and sexually empowered future for all.

Fueled by the passion of a new generation, the youth have joined forces with expert health-care professionals to launch #ForeverWena – a national HIV prevention campaign poised to empower, destigmatise and drive positive conversation around sexual health.

“We’re sparking a movement where young people feel empowered to take control of their sexual health, while also providing them with the tools they need to make healthy sexual choices,” says Kabelo Moshapalo, Chief Creative Officer for #ForeverWena campaign partners Ogilvy South Africa. “The message of #ForeverWena is ‘Choose you’! It’s a rallying call to the youth to choose themselves, to choose to put their healthiest foot forward.”

Joining the students and leading the rallying cry on campus were multi award-winning rapper and musician, Casper Nyovest, former Miss Universe, Zozibini Tunzi, broadcaster and musician Unathi Nkavi,

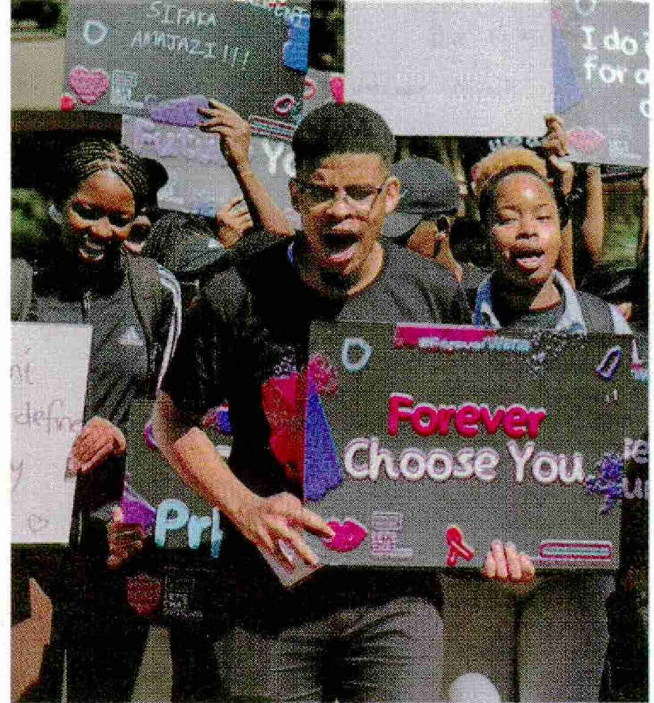
radio broadcaster and TikTok legend Dan Corder, broadcaster Stephani B, and HIV advocate Lerato Kgamanyane.

Together they pledged a message of support, care and the importance of healthy sexual health, while encouraging students to get tested for HIV, know their status and stay protected.

Although the number of people living with HIV in South Africa has decreased from 14% in 2017 to 12.7% in 2022, young women aged 15-24 are disproportionately affected by HIV, accounting for 25% of new infections.

At the same time, young men are less likely to be diagnosed and treated, increasing their likelihood of transmitting HIV to their partners. This means there’s all the more reason for the youth to embrace their agency, make informed decisions about healthy sexual behaviours, and learn their options: wear a condom, take PrEP, abstain from sex, know your status, and give or ask for consent.

“As a nation, we need to address the ongoing high rate of HIV infections and #ForeverWena is certainly an empow-



Students participating in the #ForeverWena campaign to raise awareness about HIV.

ering way to do it,” says Dr Linda-Gail Bekker, Professor of Medicine and CEO of the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation. “Every young South African deserves access to accurate, tailored information and resources, so they can make informed decisions and healthier sexual choices – for themselves, their partners, and their collective future.”

At the heart of the #ForeverWena campaign is the soon-to-be-launched WhatsApp Chatbot, which offers users access to the most accurate and credible HIV information, in a language and tone that resonates with them. Using the Chatbot, the youth can discover how to protect themselves against HIV, how to get tested and treated, and much more.